Another evident mistake consists in considering Big Bang (pp. 121–156) as a demonstration of the divine creation, or a proof for the absence of a Creator. The conceptions by which scientists want to highlight the beginning of the world cannot be evaluated as alternatives to the theological meaning of creation. Creation out of nothing, namely, the basic tenet of Christian monotheism, is not a scientific question, as the 'nothing' does not form part of the material reality and cannot be measured. Science pertains to quantities, and mathematical harmony has nothing to do with ontology, which should remain the main preoccupation of philosophy and theology.

This collection of essays can be judged a very good reading about the main topics concerning the science–faith debate in the modern age. The author manages to present that complex subject in an accessible book, so as to appeal to researchers, but also to a broader and non-specialist audience. Science is a way to discover the divine action, as the beauty and harmony of nature points to a greater Wisdom. 'The search for truth always lead us, in the end, to God' (p. 21). If we consider the claim by some scientists who believe that it is within the power of science to account for the creation of the world or the absence of free will, we can only understand their endemic unwillingness to ascertain the limits of their method.

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★ ★ ★

Fundamental Theology: A Protestant Perspective, Matthew L. Becker, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014 (ISBN 978-0-567-56833-5), xxviii + 571 pp., pb £24.99

This book, written by Matthew Becker (professor of theology at Valparaiso University, IN, USA), is intended as an introduction to preliminary matters in Christian theology. It offers both an orientation to theological prolegomena and introduces the reader to the different branches of theology. The intended readers are American undergraduate students. The book is not intended for seminary students, but rather is geared toward liberal-arts students taking a class in Christian theology. This context determines the approach in that the book also answers the question why theology should belong as an academic discipline within a university setting (p. xiii).

The book consists of fifteen chapters in three parts: I 'Theology', II 'The Subject of Christian Theology', III 'Christian Theology within the University'. Each chapter follows a similar and helpful structure that will be helpful to students and teachers alike. It starts with a brief summary of the content of the chapter. Following the main body of the chapter are some pages containing supplementary material that can be helpful in class settings: a list of keywords is followed by reference literature; then follow questions for review and discussion and finally an annotated list of suggestions for further reading is offered. Reading these introductions together with the material at the end of each chapter will give teachers a clear impression of the content of the whole book as well as the perspective taken. Students will benefit from doing the same when reviewing for their exam.

Part I (Theology) contains four chapters: (1) Ways into theology, (2) Traditions of Christianity, (3) Traditions of Christian theology, and (4) What is Christian theology. Becker deliberately starts with common human experiences that lead in the direction of religion and theology before giving a brief overview of the history of Christianity and the history of theology. This starting point is taken because the intended readers find themselves in the pluralistic setting of a liberal-arts university (p. xvi). There are some helpful charts and tables in this first part to orientate students in the diversity of Christian churches and movements and their relative size (the figure on p. 43 makes the fragmentation of Protestantism graphically clear). Although Becker is always fair in his presentation and discussion of topics, his denominational colors are also evident in this part. In the discussion of reformation and post-reformation theology, Calvin is discussed in one paragraph, while Luther and Melanchton receive much more space.

The chapter 'What is Christian theology' not only gives a clear definition, but also makes the hermeneutical character of theology as an academic discipline explicit. This leads Becker to reason for theology's necessary dialogue with philosophy, the humanities and the sciences (p. 107) as well as arguing for its place in academia rather than relegating it to church-related schools.

Part II 'The subject of Christian Theology' contains seven chapters: (5) The problem of God, (6) The natural knowledge of God, (7) Natural and philosophical theology, (8) Special revelation, (9) Themes in special revelation, (10) Sources and norms of Christian theology, and (11) Interpreting the Bible. In 'The problem of God' the new atheists are critically discussed for the persistence of God in human experience cannot be reduced to linguistic and cultural expression. In 'The natural knowledge of God' Becker affirms that 'Christian theology must continue to affirm a natural knowledge of God, if only in a very limited way as a sense or an awareness of the divine' (p. 178), taking sides against Barth and in favor of Pannenberg in this matter. A similar approach is followed

in Chapter 7, arguing for 'some continuity between the natural knowledge of God and the revealed knowledge' (p. 206), although according to this reviewer, he does not allow enough continuity for interreligious openness in this matter. Becker's ecumenical approach becomes evident in the chapter on 'Special revelation' where he prefers Vatican II's take on the balance between history and the word of God over that of Pannenberg, Bultmann, and Barth (p. 231). In 'Themes in special revelation', the Lutheran approach becomes more and more evident, especially the theme of law and gospel. In 'The sources and norms of Christian theology', Becker steers clear of fundamentalism, revisionism, and post-liberalism, maintaining the Bible as the principal but not sole source of Christian theology. He makes the distinction between the homologoumena and the antilegomena, stating that only the former New Testament writings can serve as the principal norm of Christian teaching, thereby diminishing the authority of James, Hebr, 2 Pet, 2 Jn, 3 Jn, Jude, and Rev. The authority of the Old Testament is valued by the law and gospel theme in Lutheran theology. The principal norm, unsurprisingly, is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the canon within the canon. The final chapter in this part, 'Interpreting the Bible', avoids the extremes of Biblicism, historicism, aestheticism, and subjectivism. It offers a solid argument for theological hermeneutics.

Part III, 'Christian theology within the university' offers four chapters: (12) The shape of Christian theology as a university discipline, (13) The sub-disciplines of Christian theology, (14) Christian theology and the humanities, and (15) Christian theology and the sciences. Chapter 12 develops a theme that was broached already in Chapters 1, 3, and 4 and introduces theological encyclopedia and the sub-disciplines of theology. The latter are discussed in more detail in Chapter 13. Becker opts for three main sub-disciplines: systematic, historical, and practical. In the discussion on theological ethics and its place within Christian theology, we see again the Lutheran take to theology taking prominence. Theological ethics is put under practical theology, it seems, because ethics is more 'law' than 'gospel' (p. 391). The last two chapters deal with the dialogue of theology with the humanities and the sciences. These are helpful chapters for all theology students, not only liberal-arts students. Becker highlights 'a dialectical, correlational way of relating theology to the humanities and the arts' (p. 401). 'The task of Christian theology in relation to the other humanities', according to Becker, 'is to discern the theological subject matter within them and to allow it to become prominent' (p. 427). The interaction with the sciences introduces students to how theology has to adjust its Biblical interpretation to the progress of science. It is illustrated by the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis. Becker argues nevertheless that theology must maintain that 'the objects which the sciences investigate do not exhaust reality as a totality' (p. 433).

The book ends with an afterword by Martin Marty, an appendix with an excerpt from Martin Luther's writings, a helpful glossary of names and of terms, a select bibliography, a Biblical index, and index of persons and of subjects. These tools make this book very practical for teachers and students alike.

This book successfully achieves what it promises. The apologia for theology as an academic discipline is certainly very relevant in the European context as well. Although the Protestant perspective bears clear Lutheran marks, the book can equally serve as a guide to fundamental theology for other Protestants. Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologians will also benefit from consulting this work.

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★ ★ ★

The Quest for the Historical Jesus after the Demise of Authenticity: Towards a Critical Realist Philosophy of History in Jesus Studies, Jonathan Bernier, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016 (ISBN 978-0-5676-6286-6), x + 182 pp., hb £85

The philosopher Wittgenstein once frustrated Bertrand Russell by refusing to completely rule out the possibility that there was a rhinoceros in the room. This position, while perhaps not being very sensible for practical purposes, is at least philosophically consistent: our knowledge and the sense data it is based upon cannot be guaranteed as a hundred per cent objectively certain. There might indeed be a rhinoceros in the room. It would be wisest to forebear from absolute statements one way or the other.

Jonathan Bernier's book casts many modern historical Jesus scholars in the same cautious position: Unable to absolutely guarantee any historical facts about Jesus, they consider it impossible to say anything about him. The philosophical basis for Bernier's critique is Bernard Lonergan's concept of critical realism, which Bernier portrays as an answer to both idealism and empiricism. According to Bernier, neither idealism nor empiricism deal well with questions of evidence because of their attitude towards the exterior world. Idealism sees it as only a substitute or signpost for a remote, inaccessible world of true meaning; empiricism effectively denies its existence by acknowledging only the reality of the sensory data it provides. Critical realism, however, affirms the objective existence of the external world, while also acknowledging that all our